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## THE STUDY OF THE STUDENTS' ABILITY TO USE PUNCTUATION IN WRITING SKILL

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**Abstract:** Writing is one of the skills in English that should be mastered by students. Writing is means of communication whereby writing transmit idea to the reader. There are many steps in teaching writing skill. One of the steps is the teaching of punctuation. Punctuation is an element that has an important role in writing. Punctuation refers to sign on marks used to clarify the writings' idea and the readers can understand easily the meaning of the sentences. This research used qualitative research, because this research describes about the students' ability to use punctuation in writing. The research was conducted at Senior High School in Pamekasan. The result of this research found about to what extent students use the punctuation marks. *Firstly*, external punctuation. *Secondly*, internal punctuation. *thirdly*, pairs punctuation. *Fourthly*, special punctuation. Based on the result of research, it can be concluded that the used punctuation in writing skill in the second semester students of class X state senior high school in Pamekasan couldn't used punctuation in writing, it showed by the data the average value of student' couldn't used punctuation correctly were 73 %. Students' still confuse or didn't know used punctuation, and the meaning of the text listed on the sentence that use at the and of sentence or continue with other sentence, and also between declaration and question.

**Abstrak:** Menulis merupakan salah satu keterampilan dalam bahasa Inggris yang harus dikuasai oleh siswa. Menulis adalah sarana komunikasi dimana tulisan mengirimkan ide kepada pembaca. Ada banyak langkah dalam mengajarkan keterampilan menulis. Salah satu langkahnya adalah pengajaran tanda baca. Tanda baca adalah elemen yang memiliki peran penting dalam penulisan. Tanda baca mengacu pada tanda yang digunakan untuk mengklarifikasi gagasan tulisan dan pembaca dapat memahami dengan mudah makna kalimat tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan penelitian kualitatif, karena penelitian ini menggambarkan tentang kemampuan siswa untuk menggunakan tanda baca secara tertulis. Penelitian dilakukan disalah satu SMA di Pamekasan. Hasil penelitian ini menemukan sejauh mana siswa menggunakan tanda baca. Pertama, tanda baca eksternal. Kedua, tanda baca internal. ketiga, pasang tanda baca. Keempat, tanda baca khusus. Berdasarkan hasil penelitian, dapat disimpulkan bahwa penggunaan tanda baca dalam keterampilan menulis pada siswa semester dua SMA Negeri kelas X di Pamekasan masih belum dapat menggunakan tanda baca secara tertulis, hal ini ditunjukkan oleh data nilai rata-rata siswa yang masih belum bisa menggunakan tanda baca dengan benar adalah 73%. Siswa masih bingung atau tidak tahu menggunakan tanda baca, dan memahami arti dari tanda baca yang tercantum pada teks yang digunakan pada kalimat dan atau melanjutkan dengan kalimat lain, serta antara deklarasi dan pertanyaan.

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**Key words:** Ability, Punctuation, Writing.

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## INTRODUCTION

English is international languages used by many people in the world everyday life. Therefore, using English in the acceptable way to communicate about many aspects in human life such as technology, economy, social, and politics with people from other countries. For Indonesia, Learning English is an integrated process that the learners should study the four basic skills. Listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The learners use them to understand their world through listening and reading to communicate our feeling, need, and desires through speaking and writing. By having more knowledge about language skill, students' have much better chance of understanding and being understood and getting what the learners want and need from these around them.

The four basic skills consist of: (1) Listening, understanding various meanings (interpersonal, ideational, textual) in various interactional spoken text. (2) Speaking, telling various meanings (interpersonal, ideational, textual) in various interactional spoken text. (3) Reading, understanding various meanings. (4)

Writing, telling various meanings (interpersonal, ideational, textual) in various interactional writing text. Moreover, writing is means of communication where by writers transmit idea to their reader. Its purpose is to share knowledge and idea between the writer and their reader (Carino, 1991: 12). Besides that, writing also helps to solidify the student's groups of vocabulary and structure and complements the other language skill (Chastian, 1976:364). One of the steps in teaching writing is to develop the student's ability in the information of graphemes and to acquaint with all punctuation.

The importance of punctuation marks are: 1) an aid to understanding a piece of written English as it is read. 2) A means of avoiding ambiguity in expressing meaning and of communicating precisely to the reader what is meant by the words selected and put into sequence (Evans, 1986:40). Punctuation mark is a symbol that helps the readers in expressing meaning of sentence. We use punctuation to help express our meaning. It is not decoration. It is added to piece of writing. It is part of

composition to leave it out. Punctuation marks are very important in the writing skill (Rook, 1990:40).

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses qualitative research because this research will described the students' ability to use punctuation in writing. According to Sugiyono, (2008:13,) says that Qualitative research is the research method based on post positive philosophy which is used to investigate the object naturally.

### Objective of The Data

The subject of this research in the student of class X in senior high school about how the students' use punctuation in writing skill, consists of 26 students, and the area of this research located at State Senior High School in Pamekasan.

### Research Instrument

#### Observation

There are two kinds of observation, namely: *participant* and *non-participant* observation. Participant observation, the observer involved in the daily activity which the objects are being observed or it is used

as the source of research data. The observer also actively participates to do what is done by data source and experience events in the same way as the participants. Non-participant observation, researcher observes without participating or taking any active part in the situation. In this case, researcher used non-participant observation.

#### Interview

Interview is used to gather data on subjects' opinions, beliefs, and feelings about the situation in their own words. There are two types of interview, structured interview and unstructured interview. Structured interview to the extent to which the questions to be asked are developed prior to the interview. In this instrument, researcher used structured interview to collect data by using organized and planned ahead of time, and also the each respondent was asked the same questions.

#### Documentation

Documentation according to Arikunto (2006:158), that in collecting data the researcher use documentation method to written data such as books, magazine, report, documents, etc. So

that, documentation is the method that is used by researcher in gaining the data needed which can be students result, or any written documents that enables the researcher to get the data.

In this case, researcher reviewed students' result of writing to gain the data. It means the data refer to the use of punctuation of writing skill that was used by students in the state senior high school in Pamekasan.

#### **Source of Data**

The definition of source of data according to Arikunto (2006:129), is "subjek dari mana data dapat diperoleh". It means that subject where data can be obtained. While, the subject is student in the state senior high school in Pamekasan about their ability to use punctuation in writing skill that refer to external, internal, pairs and special punctuation, where the data about them were obtained in form of written documents of students' result of the text.

#### **Data collection**

Data collection is about how researcher collected data needed in doing this research. Researcher used observation that was non-participant to gain the data about the activity that

happened when students used punctuation in writing skill. This meant that researcher tried to get the activity as data needed as natural as possible without interfere of the researcher.

#### **Data Analysis Method**

Data analysis involves reviewing the data while they are being collected and attempting to synthesize and make sense out of what is observed. According to Miles and Huberman (1992:10), After the data is gotten, the researcher processes the data using steps below:

#### **Collecting**

In gaining data which were need by researcher, researcher collected the data by using research instruments, observation, interview, and documentation. Researcher used observation as non- participant where the researcher observed the students activity in class room. Researcher observed students in class room when problem happened on the use of punctuation in writing skill. Researcher used interview to students to obtain the data needed to know students in using punctuation on

writing skill. Then researcher used documentation, the aimed to complete the data from his research

### **Data Reduction**

In classifying the data collected, researcher classified the data based on problem whether they were collected through observation, interview, and documentation. All the data which were obtained from students classified based on the category of the problem. Researcher reduced the unneeded data which were collected in the research field. It means the data refer to external punctuation must be classified into the external punctuation category, and also the data refer to internal, pairs and specials punctuation classified into themselves.

### **Verifying**

The data that had been classified and when researcher came back again to the research field and then tried to check the data by investigating another data collected, and verified whether there is a relationship between the previous data and later, so it is valid. Researcher asked to the relevant teacher after observation and interviewing and giving questionnaire sheet to students about the data

collected whether suitable or not. If it was suitable so it was valid, and if not researcher investigated again to gain data which were needed to answer the problem of this research.

### **Analyzing**

The researcher made an analysis on the data obtained from research instrument, observation, interview and documentation before drawing conclusion. The data were analyzed based on its category so that research can make a conclusion easily.

### **Drawing conclusion**

Researcher made a conclusion while being in the research field and after the data collected. Conclusion was made in form of an analyzing descriptive writing based on the happened phenomenon when the research was conducted and the evidences of data collected.

Drawing conclusion was made to enable researcher to find the answer of the problem of this research.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

The researcher took observation on 25 April 2017, involves 26 students'. In this section, the researcher will explain the result in

getting of research objective from the field by interview, observation and documentation methods.

In this research, researcher wants to know the ability of students to use punctuations on the text given by the researcher of the fourth semester of English department. This research only deals with some standard marks of punctuation, namely the external punctuation marks such as period or full stop (.), question mark (?), and exclamation mark (!), the internal punctuation marks such as semi colon (;), colon (:), and comma (,), the pairs punctuation marks such as quotation marks ("...") and parentheses ( ( ) ); and the specials punctuation marks such as apostrophe (') and hyphen (-).

### **The Use of Punctuation**

The finding on how the students use punctuation in writing text, whether external, internal, pairs, or special punctuation in the text of student's state senior high school in Pamekasan.

### **External Punctuation**

#### **1. Full Stop (.)**

In the collecting data there are observation, documentation, and interview about a descriptive study on

the students' ability to use punctuation in writing skill in the state senior high school in Pamekasan, on April 25, 2017. Researchers obtained results from 26 students in the class X even semester, Students who can use full stop (.) correctly only 14 students of (5 male, and 9 female), and Students who can't use punctuation correctly there are 12 students (3 male, and 9 female). For example: "*I have a cat in my house.* The cat is male. I like call him papay, he is an adorable cat, my cat is cute," from correct sentence "*I have a cat in my house, The cat is male. I like call him 'papay'. He is an adorable cat, my cat is cute.*". From this sentences student uses full stop. The right answer uses coma before full stop.

### **Exclamation Mark (!)**

Based on the research result through documentation about writing skill, students in the state senior high school in Pamekasan, On April 25, 2017. From 26 students in fourth semester, Students who can use exclamation mark (!) Correctly only 2 student (2female), and Students who can't use punctuation correctly there are 24 Students (8 male, and 16

female). For example: “his body is fat, He has black and white fur, i really love to cuddle him because his fur fells soft.”, correct sentence : “his body is fat. He has black and white fur! I really love to cuddle him, because his fur fells soft.”. from the example above the student answered un correct punctuation, students should uses full stop (.). The right answer students uses exclamation mark (!).

### Question Mark (?)

In the observation of a student in a sentence “What is for tea mom?”. Students who can use question mark (?) correctly, only 6 students (1 male, and 5 female), and students who can’t use punctuation correctly there are 19 students (7 male, and 12 female). For example: “The boys name was daniel. And he was always asking what is for tea mom, anyway. One day he broke a teacup. Which his mother had placed near the edge of the table.”. Correct sentences: “the boy’s name was Daniel and he was always asking what is for tea mom?, anyway one day he broke a teacup, which his mother had placed near the edge of the table,”. The right answer students use question mark.

## Internal Punctuation

### 1. Colon (:)

The researcher also use interview to gain the data On 27 April 2017. From 26 students in the class X even semester, students who can use colon (:) correctly only 8 students (4 male, and 4 female), and Students who can’t use punctuation Correctly there are 19 students (3 male, and 15 female). For example: “I live in there since I childhood my uncle house there much trees example; mango tree, banana tree, graph tree, orange tree.” In correct sentences here is: “trees example: mango tree, banana tree, graph tree, orange tree.”. in the sentence student answered un correctly punctuation in wrong sentence students uses semi colon(;). The right answer uses colon (:).

### 2. Semi Colon (;)

In usage of semi colon, the researcher use observation to the students, The researcher got the result that from 26 students in the fourth semester, students who can use colon (:) correctly only 19 students (2 male, and 17 female), and Students who can’t use punctuation Correctly there



are 6 students (6 male). For example:  
*"There are bamboo trees edge the river, and sometimes we just sit under that bamboo trees, because very cool there."*. Correct sentence: *"There are bamboo trees edge the river; and sometimes we just sit under that bamboo trees, because very cool there"*. In the sentence students used un correct punctuation. Student answered incorrectly uses coma (,). The right answer uses colon (;).

### 3. Coma (,)

From the result of documentation, the researcher got the result on April 25, 2017, students who can use coma (,) correctly, only 4 students (2 male, and 2 female), and Students can't use punctuation Correctly there are 22 students (6male, and 16 female). For example: *"Every morning my mother give a fish!" some time He usually scratches out my arm, when I play with him,"*. Correct sentences: *"Every morning my mother give a fish, sometime he usually scratches out my arm when I play with him."*. Student answered un correct punctuation students uses semi colon(;). The right answer uses coma (,).

### Pair's punctuation marks

### 1. Quotation Mark ("...")

A quotation mark is used by students in the sentence. The researcher got the result from student who can use Quotation marks ("...") correctly, only 2 students (2 female), and Students who can't use Point punctuation Correctly there are 24 students (8 male, and 16 female). For example: from wrong sentence *"I like call him papay"*. From correct sentence *"I like call him "papay"."* Student answered un correct punctuation uses coma(,). The right answer uses Quotation Mark ("...").

### 2. Parentheses (())

In putting parentheses, students have different ways how to put parentheses in the sentence. From the observation result, researcher got the result that from 26 students in the fourth semester, students who can use parenthesis (()) correctly only 5 students (3 male and 2 female), and students who can't use the punctuation Correctly there are 21 students (5 male, and 16 female). For eexample: *"BJ Habibie was the one who came from Mainland, first Asian to lead the most important companies in Europe."* From correct sentences: *"BJ Habibie*



was the one who came from (Mainland) first Asian to lead the most important companies in Europe.”. Student answered un correct punctuation uses coma (.). The right answer uses parenthesis (()).

## Special Punctuation Mark

### 1. Apostrophe (')

Based on the finding, that students put an apostrophe (') in the text, the result from 26 students in the class X even semester, Students who can use Apostrophe punctuation (') correctly, only 3 students (1male, and 2 female), and Students who can't use punctuation There are really 23 students (7 male, and 16 female). For example: “The boys name was Daniel, and he was always asking what is for tea, mum?’, anyway one day he broke a teacup, which his mother had placed near the edge of the table, and he was spanked soundly for his carelessness.”. from correct sentence: “The boy’s name was Daniel and he was always asking, ‘what is for tea, mum?’ Anyway, one day he broke a teacup, which his mother had placed

near the edge of the table, and he was spanked soundly for his carelessness.”. Student answered un correct punctuation. The right answer uses apostrophe (')

### 2. Hyphen (-)

From data collection, there are observation, documentation, and interview, researcher got the result that from 26 students in the fourth semester, students who can use Hyphen (-) correctly only 11 students (3 male and 8 female), and Students who can't Using punctuation correctly there are 15 students (5 male, and 11 female). For example: “ My father Lukman is 5 years older than my mother. He is 52. In spite of his age he's still black haired, with several grey hairs.”. from correct sentence: “My father, Lukman, is 5 years older than my mother. He is 52. In spite of his age he's still black-haired, with several grey hairs.”. Student answered incorrect punctuation. The right answer uses hyphen (-).

The Table result of the students used correct and incorrect punctuation.

No	Punctu- ation	Students used correct punctuation	Students used incorrect Punctuation
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1	(.)	53,8%	46,1%
2	(!)	7,6%	92,3%
3	(?)	23,7%	73,7%
4	(:)	30,7%	69,2%
5	(;)	73,7%	23,7%
6	(,)	15,3%	84,6%
7	("..")	7,6%	61,5%
8	(( ))	19,2%	80,7%
9	(')	11,5%	88,4%
10	(-)	42,3%	57,6%

placement of full stop in the middle of the sentence that is still associated with the next sentence. In addition, the mistake made is un correct and at the end of the sentence it must end with a full stop, and continue with a capital, But students use comma to stop at the end of a sentence.

## Discussion

In this study, the researchers found the results of the students, how the students use correct punctuation and un correct of punctuation. So the researcher will discuss about the mistake how to put punctuation from the students.

### 1. Full stop

Full stop Is use Ending a sentence with a full stop. Beside that, the period is used in the following condition it is used to mark the end of sentence (Farbman 1985:393). Based on the finding that the students have mistake to put punctuation full stop (.) correctly, for example: "**I have a cat in my house.** The cat is male. I like call him papay, he is an adorable cat, my cat is cute;". Based on the finding the students have mistake how to make the

### 2. Exclamation mark (!)

Exclamation mark is used at the end of sentence, phase, or word to indicate strong emotion, beside that according to Stanley (1992:586), Exclamation Mark is also often called the Exclamation Point, both are equally used to end sentences. Exclamation Mark shaped like a simple vertical line above the comma. In the language of the United Kingdom it is only used at the end of the sentence which States the expression. For example: "*his body is fat, **He has black and white fur,** I really love to cuddle him because his fur fells soft*". The finding there is a mistake from the sentence here, students should use the exclamation mark on the word "fur", because in the sentence constitute of declaration, in order that the reader

will understand to read the sentence, but students use punctuation coma on the sentence “*fur,*” actually the students here fell difficult between use coma and exclamation mark, even the students think that punctuation coma will use every at the end of sentence.

### 3. Question Mark (?)

Question Mark is used at the end of sentences in which the writer intends to ask as a question (Lingga, 2006:321). Students used the question mark in order to reader still on focus or concentration in searching the topic or main idea of a composition, so students will understand the composition. For example: “*the boys name was daniel. And he was always asking what is for tea mom, anyway. One day he broke a teacup. Which his mother had placed near the edge of the table*” the mistake from the sentence “*what is for tea mom*”. While, the finding the students in the fourth semester there is some mistake from the punctuation, the right punctuation in this sentence is use question mark,

but the student uses a coma. In fact, students can differ about declaration and question, should students know that is question, because the sentence here have instruction and showed the question, and The correct sentence is “*what is for tea mom?*”

### 4. Colon (:)

Colon is used after greeting of business later or salutation. Beside A colon is used after an independent clause to precede a quotation. Colon is used by students to show list, explanation, and sample (Lado and Robert, 1996:6). For example of sentence “*I live in there since I childhood my uncle house there much trees example;* *mango tree, banana tree, graph tree, orange tree*”. Students use the colon mark to the sentence, since to make clear and separate the independent clause from a list. The independent clause of “*I live in there since I childhood my uncle house there much trees*”, and the list is “*example: mango tree, banana tree, graph tree, orange tree*”. It means that after the colon mark “*mango tree, banana tree, graph tree, orange tree*” are the example of word “much tree”.

It makes clearer between the independent clause from list, and also the mistake from the students here in the sentence "much trees" students should use colon because its mean the sentence will understand to the writer if will continue to write the sentence there is the colon of punctuation, because of not only the writer, but also the reader will confuse to read that the sentence will stop or not.

#### 5. Semi Colon (;)

Semi colon (;) are sometimes used instead of full stops, in chases where sentences are grammatically independent but the meaning is closely connected. Semi colons are not nearly as common as full stops or commas (Gerson, 1997:445). Students used a semi colon (;) in their writings to show something sequence as in example of a sentence "There are bamboo trees edge the river, and sometimes we just sit under that bamboo trees, because very cool there". The analysis students confuse in placing coma between semi colon The mistake students not giving the sign of the semi colon after sentence "river" because commas are used to separate the equivalent

sentence that one of the following equivalent sentences thus student use coma on the phrase "river" because students think that sentence is still rather wear a semi colon than on commas.

#### 6. Coma (,)

The important use of comma is to mark of clauses, a group of word or single word which have been added to the main sentence and which the writer wishes the reader to notice (Stanley, 1992-586:590). In using coma students have different ways, for example: "every morning my mother give a fish! He usually scratches out my arm when. I play with him,". However, The mistake in the sentence "Every morning my mother give a fish", should be a comma and other mistake the student use capital letters in a sentence "he usually" should the use of capital letters in place at the beginning of the sentence or after the punctuation of full stop. The researcher here found from the mistake from this sentence, automatically the students here still confuse about how to put coma and use the capital letter after use full stop.

#### 7. Quotation Mark ("...")

Quotation marks are used to enclose word, phrase, or sentences that are quoted directly from speech or writing (Stanley, 1992:596). Students use un correct punctuation in the text, such as: “*I like call him “papay”.*” in the sentence “*papay*” based on the finding, the mistake committed by the students is not giving the sign of the quotation on the phrase “*papay*”. From the example above why the students still not focus to use a quotation mark, because the students think that quotation only use if there is a warning like “*no smoking*”, but its so clear that if the “*papay*” showed the name of the cat. Other mistake in the text in the sentence “*himself*” uses the exclamation mark sign is supposed to use the comma, in order to the reader will easy to the sentence if the students us un correct punctuation, the researcher think that the students still cant to use exclamation and also quotation mark of punctuation.

## 8. Parentheses ( )

Parentheses are used to clarify preceding information in a sentence. Students use parentheses define a term or a long term to be abbreviated inside

parentheses (Stanley, 1992:596). For Example: “*BJ Habibie was the one who came from Mainland*, first Asian to lead the most important companies in Europe.”. Based on the finding, in this text the student not put parentheses mark on the phrase “*mainland*”. The parenthesis is used to clarify word “*Mainland*”, which “*Mainland*” means is?. Students cant differ between parentheses and coma, event the students should put the parentheses of punctuation, because the sentence showed that “*mainland*” have explanation with the sentence before, its mean “*BJ habibi*”, and also The reader will be easy to read if the writer put the punctuation of parentheses correctly.

## 9. Apostrophe (‘)

Apostrophe is a punctuation mark, and sometimes a diacritic mark, in languages that use the Latin alphabet or certain other alphabets. Students used the apostrophe is to have left letters out of contracted (Lingga, 2006:322). Example: “*The boys name was Daniel*, and he was always asking what is for tea, mum?’, anyway one day he broke a teacup, which his

*mother had placed near the edge of the table, and he was spanked soundly for his carelessness*". The analysis, there are so many mistake from the punctuation, the students didn't put punctuation apostrophe in the sentence "*the boy's*". Beside that, the students must be see that Daniel' and Mum', which both begin with a capital letter because there is two particular individuals. In addition, the actual words which Daniel used are quoted and are therefore 'encased' in inverted commas.

#### 10. hyphen

The hyphen (-) is a punctuation mark used to join words and to separate syllables of a single word (Stanley, 1992:565). Students is used to combine one word to other words for example: "*My father Lukman is 5 years older than my mother. He is 52. In spite of his age he's still black haired, with several grey hairs*". From the finding, The student's mistake is not to use hyphens in the sentence "black haired" students make the writer or the reader confuse to the sentence, should student use correct punctuation, but the fact from all of the

punctuation students still understand, and also from the mistake here, students cant use hyphen of punctuation, because students think the hyphen only use in the sentence if there is some connection with the sentence before, and also from the example above should students use hyphen of punctuation.

#### CONCLUSION

Based on the result of research, it can be concluded that the used punctuation in writing skill in the second semester students of class X state senior high school in Pamekasan couldn't used punctuation in writing, it showed by the data the average value of student' couldn't used punctuation correctly were 73 %. Students' still confuse or didn't know used punctuation, and the meaning of the text listed on the sentence that use at the and of sentence or continue with other sentence, and also between declaration and question, actually studied of writing, students' couldn't understand the function of the used punctuation, and also already suppose

that the punctuation is suitable used to the sentence.

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